When you were a kid, did your mother tell you to stop picking your nose? Do you wonder what's so awful about chewing with your mouth open? Have you thought about whether or not it's okay to pee in the shower? If you answered yes to any of these questions, *The Book of Bad Habits* is for you. Overflowing with comprehensive dos and don'ts, self-discovery quizzes, and real-life facts that will blow you away, it's your one-stop shop for the habits everyone loves to hate.

THE BOOK OF BAD HABITS

BIG BOOK PRESS

The Book of Bad Habits

For Young (and Not So Young!) Men and Women

How to Chuck the Worst and Turn the Rest to Your Advantage

Hawkins and Laube, M.D.

THE BOOK OF

Bad Habits

Also by Big Book Press

The Boy's Body Guide

The Boy's Fitness Guide

THE BOOK OF

Bad Habits

Frank C. Hawkins
and
Greta L.B. Laube, M.D.

Illustrated by Rich Hong

Big Book Press

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INTRODUCTION | *FRANK C. HAWKINS*

There are people who claim they understand the dos and don'ts of social behavior. Not you or me, obviously, but prim and proper people, expert in those sorts of things, who spend their lives considering under what circumstances it's okay to eat French fries with your fingers.

Then there are the rest of us. While not *the* experts, we each have opinions of what is and what isn't socially acceptable. If you don't believe me, just ask any two people you know whether it's okay to spit on the sidewalk. You'll get an answer for sure—probably conflicting—but you'll get one nonetheless. Regrettably, people don't agree. Not even the experts.

So, what is a *bad habit* you ask? Let's start with the word *bad*, which means "unwelcome or unpleasant." Next, the word *habit*, which means a "regular practice or tendency." A *bad habit*, then, would be the *regular practice or tendency of saying or doing something unwelcome or unpleasant*.

That definition seems straightforward enough. But, on further examination, it's

anything but. The difficulty comes when we try to distinguish regular from irregular, welcome from unwelcome. If your action offends or puts the health and welfare of you or someone else at risk, it likely will be judged as unwelcome and out of the norm—*bad*, that is. Farting in the elevator is offensive, but it's not going to harm anyone. Smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, however, is another story. Both are bad habits.

Some bad habits make people laugh. Belching the ABCs for your friends is funny because it breaks—or at least bends—the rules of acceptable social behavior. It's good to remember, though, that every action has consequences good and bad. Belching for your friends and belching in a job interview are not the same—unless you're auditioning for a spot in an antacid commercial. You need to know when and where society draws the line between what's acceptable and what's not.

That's where this book comes in. It may come as a surprise, but we're not going to tell you to stop *all* your bad habits. Some are too fundamentally satisfying to be

stopped altogether even though they may annoy someone. On the other side of that coin are those habits that can hurt others or make them sick. You should stop them for the benefit of society as a whole.

Now, let's take a look at a few of our bad habits—the things we do that are at once appealing and repulsive, satisfying and disgusting, celebrated and reviled.

THE BOOK OF

Bad Habits

Nothing so needs reforming
as other people's habits.

MARK TWAIN (1835-1910)

PICKING YOUR NOSE

Nose picking is the act of digging boogers from your nose. Sesquipedalians (persons given to using long words) call people who pick their noses *rhinotillexomaniacs*: from the Greek *rhinos*, "the nose" + *tillexis*, "the habit of picking" + *mania*, "obsession with something."

No one knows who the first person to pick his nose was. That's because it happened before people could write. Popular accounts say that the first record of nose picking appeared about 1330 B.C. in ancient Egypt. Apparently, an archaeologist by the name of Dr. Wilbur Leakey found a papyrus scroll that detailed the financial payment of three heads of cattle and food and lodging to Tutankhamun's personal nose picker.[1]

Here's how it worked. The membranes in the good Pharaoh's nose produced wet mucus. As he breathed in–and–out through his nose, the mucus dried and became crusty. That crusty mucus irritated

Tutankhamun's nose, and the rest is history. Except for the fact that most people pick their own noses these days, not much has changed in the last 3,000 or so years.

Just to prove it, in 1995, *The Journal of Psychiatry* published the results of a nose picking study in which the 1,000 residents of Dane County, Wisconsin were surveyed.[2] Here's what the 254 people who responded had to say:

> More than 90% confessed they picked their nose.
>
> Almost 10% claimed they have never picked their nose. (We suspect these people are liars or suffer from memory loss.)
>
> About 25% admitted they pick their noses every day.
>
> Three people said they pick every hour of every day.
>
> One person claimed to pick more than 2 hours each day.
>
> About 10% ate their boogers.

Let's face it. We all pick our noses, whether it's to get rid of a hanging booger, scratch an itch, or relieve irritation caused

by that crusty mucus. Some of us even do it just because it's fun and boogers taste good.

No matter how necessary or satisfying it is, though, nose picking is considered rude and repugnant. Here are some ideas on how to pick, flick, and stick boogers without grossing out absolutely everyone.

Picking Dos and Don'ts

- Try to pick your nose only when you're alone.
- Remember that wet boogers stick and dry boogers bounce.
- Use a handkerchief or tissue paper if you must pick in public. Make it quick and discreet.
- Don't pick while seated at the table eating with other people.
- Don't pick if you are handling food and drinks for others.
- Remember that picking does not impress girls—or boys for that matter.

BELCHING

Belch, from the Old English "*belcettan*," is what's called an onomatopoeic word; that is, it reproduces a natural sound, like fizz. Belch*ing*, also known as burping, eructation, and ructus, is the return of air from either your esophagus or stomach through your mouth. Vibration of your upper esophageal sphincter produces the sound (you know the one) as air passes through it. In the way of belching basics, just know that air in = belches out.

Like everyone, you have two one-way valves, or sphincters, which open and close to let food and drink (and air) move down your throat, through your esophagus, and into your stomach. When you swallow, your upper sphincter opens to let food and drink (and air) enter your esophagus. As the food and drink (and air—see a pattern here?) reach the bottom of your esophagus, your lower sphincter opens and allows it to pass into your stomach.

While all belches sound similar, each has a distinct personality. *Bombshell* belches, for example, come from your stomach. They

are spontaneous and involuntary. Bombshells happen when they happen, and they smell like whatever it was that you last ate. This can be a problem if you're seated at the dinner table or meeting your girlfriend's father for the first time.

Backfire belches are when you deliberately force air you swallowed while eating and drinking back out by contracting your abdominal muscles and relaxing your upper esophageal sphincter.

Then there's our personal favorite, the *Barrage*. It's executed just like the backfire except that you intentionally swallow a gulp of air and immediately force it back up. This mother-of-all belches gives you the ability to belch at will. With practice, you can control the belch's duration, acoustic range, and volume.

According to people who are interested in these things, the loudest belch ever recorded (so far) was 107.1 decibels (dB). Paul Hunn from the United Kingdom achieved this record of epic proportions in London on September 24, 2008. And just so you'll know, Mr. Hunn produced about the

same noise level with his belch, as does a power mower at a distance of 3 feet.

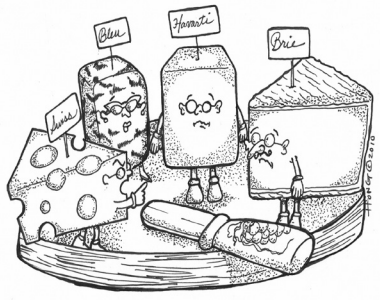
In most English-speaking countries, belching out loud is considered impolite. There are other places, though, where belching signals the host that you're finished with your meal, and a good strong belch is considered an accolade for the cook. With these differences in mind, here are a few dos and don'ts for our little corner of the world.

Belching Dos and Don'ts

- Belch quietly and cover your mouth when there's sufficient warning of what's coming. Keep your lips closed if you can, and quietly release the air through your nose or mouth.
- Say, "Excuse me!" no matter whether your burp is quiet or loud, a surprise or planned.
- Don't drink carbonated beverages like sodas from cans, bottles, or through a straw. (Unless you want to belch.)

Consider This: There's no Guinness World Record for the longest belch.

FARTING



"ALRIGHT, WHO CUT THE CHEESE?"

Farting is the act of releasing gas from your anus, otherwise known as the hole in your butt. The formal word for fart is *flatulence*: from Latin *flatus*, "blowing." Farts also are called gassers, stinkers, air biscuits, bombers, barking spiders, rotten eggs, and wet ones. You can pass gas, break wind, blast, poof, rip one, let one fly, and cut the cheese. As Juliet said to Romeo, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Everyone farts. The only requirement is that you have gas in your digestive tract, that is, your esophagus, stomach, small intestine, or large intestine. Fart gas comes from air that you swallow and from the normal breakdown of foodstuff by bacteria in your large intestine.

Burping is the way you get rid of most of the air that you swallow while eating and

drinking. (See *Belching*.) Any gas that remains after that big after-dinner burp moves on to your small intestine, where it is partially absorbed. Then, what little is left travels into your large intestine destined for release through your anus.

In the end, it's bacteria in your intestines that get credit for causing most of the gas that makes you fart. It all happens in your large intestine (or colon) as bacteria work to digest sugars and starches that haven't already been digested in your small intestine. Those bacteria produce hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and sometimes methane as they digest food.

> There once was a lady named Cager,
> Who as the result of a wager,
> Consented to fart The entire oboe part Of Mozart's quartet in F-major.
>
> Anonymous

The bacteria also make small amounts of hydrogen sulfide and mercaptans, both of which contain sulfur. That's what gives gas its smell. The more sulfur-rich food you eat, the more sulfides and mercaptans your body makes, the worse your farts smell. Cauliflower, corn, bell peppers, cabbage, milk, bread,

eggs, and raisins make for really foul smelling farts. Beans make you fart a lot, but bean farts usually aren't that smelly.

Here are some facts to impress your friends. Use them wisely and only at the appropriate time; in other words, not during dinner or in front of polite company.

The average person farts 14 times a day.

Vibrations of your anal opening make fart noise, not the flapping of your butt cheeks.

The smelliest farts, euphemistically referred to as SBDs (silent-but-deadly), are usually warmer and quieter than regular farts.

Girls fart just as much as guys, although guys take more pride in fart-related accomplishments than do girls.

Eating stimulates peristalsis, a series of smooth muscle contractions that pushes foodstuffs through your intestines and toward your anus. That's why you fart and poop right after a meal.

Holding a fart won't make it go away. Sooner or later it's going to happen.

People fart in their sleep.

> Farts are flammable because they contain hydrogen (spelled H-i-n-d-e-n-b-u-r-g) and methane. Be careful.

Farting at an inopportune moment can be embarrassing. When this happens, there are many different strategies to deal with the situation. You can, of course, fess up to your indiscretion. Or if you suspect people may not know it's you that farted, you can act oblivious and glance knowingly at the person next to you. Or you can try alternative strategies to disguise your deed, like coughing or moving your chair so that people might think they misheard the fart.

<u>Farting Dos and Don'ts</u>

- Try to fart only when you're alone.
- Don't fart at the dinner table or in enclosed spaces, like elevators.
- Say, "Excuse me!" if you fart by accident and everyone knows it was you.
- Don't fart in front of girls, unless you know them very well.
- Enjoy your farts. They are here to stay.

GRABBING YOUR CROTCH

Grabbing your crotch is the overt act of holding, stroking, patting, scratching, massaging, or otherwise touching your genitals in public. There are many reasons to touch your genitalia, otherwise known as your *package*. There are matters of necessity, like scratching a pesky itch or rearranging your package if it's tangled in your underwear. There also are matters of choice. These are when men handle their package because they believe it makes them look good or because it feels good. In some countries, handling your package brings you good luck. Or so those who do it say.

There are two ways to grab your crotch: inside or outside your pants. Most baseball players and entertainers, especially rap singers, favor the outside technique. If you want to be noticed, outside is the best way of handling things, so to speak. It's hard to do a good job scratching, though, when it's done through a steel-cupped athletic supporter and several layers of clothing. This leads us to conjecture that outside maneuvers are mostly for titillation and

show, kind of like a cock rooster fretting and strutting about with his chest feathers puffed out.

Inside manipulation, on the other hand, is a more intimate act carried out in the virtual privacy of your pants. Your options for an inside maneuver are to go over the top, up the leg (works okay with shorts), or, if discretion is called for, through the pocket (also called *pocket pool*). Playing good pocket pool is an art in and of itself. How well you play depends on how tight your pants are, the size and design of your pockets, the thickness of the material, and whether or not you are lucky enough to have a hole in one or both the pockets.

This brings us to Italy. Apparently, grabbing your crotch has been outlawed there. Italy's Court of Appeal has issued a "hands-off" ruling which threatens to arrest and fine hapless male citizens caught doing a crotch grab for any reason. The courts have spoken, saying, "The touching of genitalia in public is a sign of ill manners and must be considered against public decency." This turn of events is all the more

reason to play only pocket pool while in Italy.

There you have it. Some consider crotch grabbing a harmless and instinctive reflex. Others are repulsed by it in any form. Individual feelings aside, it's clear that society generally considers such public displays unacceptable even though it's tolerated—even expected—by some professional athletes and entertainment persona, among others. Given all this conflicting information, here are some ideas to help you through the social minefield surrounding crotch grabs.

Crotch Grabbing Dos and Don'ts

- Think of crotch grabs as a private matter. Handle them accordingly.
- Wash your hands after inside grabs.
- Don't shake hands or serve food right after a grab.
- Stay calm if you absolutely have to perform a grab. Assess your surroundings. Are you in a dark movie theater or at the dinner table? Take the appropriate action.
- Go for it. (Professional athletes and entertainers only.)

Peeing in the Shower

Urinating, peeing, whizzing, or otherwise emptying your bladder onto the shower floor (or wall) is something 90% of people have done.[3] If it's any consolation, most people who admit peeing in the shower also say they don't do it every time they shower. We don't know about you, but that tidbit of information makes us feel a little better.

> How can it be so wrong when it feels so right?
>
> Anonymous

So, you ask, why do people get into the shower knowing they have to pee? Chances are they don't have the urge until after they're in the shower. All that flowing and splashing water triggers a programmed response in most people telling them to urinate. Remember that p-i-s-s, p-i-s-s, p-i-s-s sound your mom made to persuade you to pee when you were little? Same idea.

What are the pros and cons of peeing in the shower? Supporters argue it conserves water by saving on toilet flushes. They say it saves time when you're in a hurry. Some even say that urinating on your feet cures

Athlete's Foot. (This isn't true, by the way.) On the other side of the argument, detractors say peeing in the shower is a nasty, unsanitary, indolent act.

It turns out that urine from healthy kidneys is sterile in that it normally does not contain bacteria. Your urine can become infected with bacteria, though, if you have a urinary tract infection or if it picks up bacteria from your skin on the way out.

To pee or not to pee: that is the question. Whichever your persuasion, here are a few dos and don'ts to consider when you find yourself faced with the decision.

Peeing in the Shower Dos and Don'ts

- Aim for the drain if you can't refrain.
- Don't play with your pee: for example, trying to write your name on a steamed-up glass door.
- Wear flip-flops in communal showers. Chances are very good that someone is peeing in it.
- Establish a schedule if you want to stop the habit: go to the bathroom and then take your shower. It's not hard to stop once you give it a little thought.

Being a Slob

A slob, from the Irish Gaelic *slab*, "mud," is a person regarded as slovenly, lazy, crude, or obnoxious. In the way of further explanation, sloven, from the Middle Dutch *slof*, is a person who is careless in appearance, habits, work, and who is dirty or untidy. You know, a slob.

> You can't teach people to be lazy—either they have it, or they don't.
>
> Dagwood Bumstead

Slobdom (remember you heard it here first) is the realm within which some people live. It's not simply a lack of good personal hygiene or housekeeping neglect, but a lifestyle that violates the bastions of civilized society. Slobdom suggests a state of cluttered dirty disorganization manifesting itself in endless ways, limited only to one's tolerance of living in confusion and squalor.

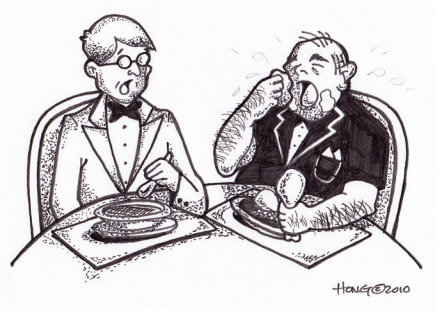
Top 10 Indicators You May Be a Slob

- Almost everything you own is somewhere on the floor of your room.
- Your nicest shirt is from a Black Eyed Peas concert.
- You never put anything away, including food from the refrigerator.
- Socks and underwear are optional clothing for you.
- Your fingernail and toenail clippings are anywhere and everywhere.
- Your bathroom mirror is covered with toothpaste splatter.
- You drink milk and orange juice directly from the container.
- You never throw anything away.
- You don't remember the last time you showered.
- You look like you slept in your clothes because you did.

How big a slob are you? Add up the total number of indicators that describe you (0-10) and find your number in the chart on the next page. Read 'em and weep.

SCORE	DEGREES OF SLOBDOM
0	Fantastic! But, are you sure you're being honest about this?
1-3	Good Job! A solid score. You should pull through just fine.
4-6	Middle of the road. Could be better. Could be worse. Some improvement wouldn't hurt.
7-9	Oh, no! An intervention by your friends may be in order. Take a hard look at yourself and consider making some changes. You know who you are!
10	Look at it this way: there's nowhere to go but up.

CHEWING WITH YOUR MOUTH OPEN



Sharing is good. Food is good. But sharing the sights and sounds of food in your mouth as you chew isn't good. Smacking your lips as you open and close your jaws makes lots of noise. It's a spectacle. Partially chewed food falls from your open mouth or is catapulted across the table. People are grossed out. So why do they even care?

Well, since you asked: how you chew is a part of *etiquette*, the customary code of polite behavior. Nine thousand years ago, prehistoric men had rules (manners) to determine who dipped their wooden spoons into the common cooking pot to eat first. By the way, the men were first.

Two thousand years ago, Greek and Roman manners dictated that people eat with their fingers while reclining on a couch and propped up on one arm. Today,

certain indigenous peoples of the Arctic consider it proper to eat from a common cooking pot with their hands, men first, then women and children.

American table manners had their beginnings in the European courts around 1100 A.D. The rules were to make eating a more pleasant and orderly experience. People were asked not to speak with their mouths full, not to pick their teeth with their knives, or to grab food.

As time went by, diners learned not to lick their fingers, smack their lips, snort, or put their faces in their food. Forks were used for the first time during the Renaissance. People began eating from plates, and bones weren't to be thrown on the floor anymore for the animals to eat. Everyone had his own cup, too.

While table manners have improved since then, we still have a way to go. According to Emily Post,[4] here are the top 10 bad table manners to be avoided:

1. Leaving the table without saying, "excuse me."
2. Doing a "boardinghouse" reach to get what you want from across the table.

3. Slouching over your place setting or leaning on your elbows while eating.
4. Cutting up all your food at once.
5. Drinking while still chewing food—unless you're choking, of course.
6. Failing to put your napkin on your lap or use it at all.
7. Picking your teeth at the table or, even worse, flossing.
8. Holding eating utensils like a shovel.
9. Slurping, smacking, blowing your nose, or making any other unpleasant noises while seated at the table.
10. Chewing food with your mouth open or talking with food in your mouth.

Table manners vary from place-to-place and culture-to-culture. What's okay in America won't pass muster in Rangoon, or the other way around. What's acceptable one day may not be the next because manners are always changing to meet society's needs. As things stand now, here are some general pointers to chew on.

Table-related Dos and Don'ts

- Avoid Emily's top 10 bad manners at all costs.
- When you're not sure what to do, watch other people and follow their lead.

- Don't bite off more than you can chew, literally and figuratively.
- Set aside time to eat. It's impossible to have good manners when you're in a rush.

SPITTING

Expectorating, otherwise known as spitting, is the act of forcibly expelling spittle, quids, seeds, pits, or the like from your mouth. Today, spitting is normally considered rude and socially unacceptable. It wasn't always so.

German Sociologist Norbert Elias, in his two-volume *The Civilizing Process*,[5] records prohibitions against spitting from the Middle Ages to 1910. In the Middle Ages, for example, spitting at meals was permitted, provided it was under the table and not on or across it—a habit apparently common among ill-mannered hunters at the time. In the 18th century, etiquette guides directed that, "You should not abstain from spitting, and it is very ill mannered to swallow what should be spat." The guides went on, though, to discourage spitting "when you are with well-born people" and not "in church, in the houses of the great, and in all places where cleanliness reigns."

Putting the social aspects aside, public health concerns over tuberculosis in the 1880s was the coup de grâce for public

spitting. New York City issued an ordinance prohibiting it in 1896.[6] Public health dangers, especially when it came to tuberculosis and influenza, were taken seriously, and word spread quickly. By 1916, 195 of 213 American cities with populations over 25,000 had laws against public spitting on the books.[7]

We would be remiss at this point to not mention the venerable cuspidor, otherwise known as a spittoon. Cuspidors were used in the 1800s to give people a place to spit, especially those who chewed tobacco. With the exception of the U.S. Supreme Court, spittoons have virtually vanished. Nowadays, the nine Justices are provided with pewter drinking cups and personal spittoons. They use their spittoons as wastebaskets. Justice John Marshall Harlan, who served until 1911, is considered the last tobacco-chewing Justice to actually spit into his wastebasket.

> There once was a man from Ealing,
> Who rode the bus to Peeling. It said on the door, "Don't spit on the floor," So he lay down and spat on the ceiling.
>
> Anonymous

Supreme Court Justices aside, baseball players are infamous spitters. Almost since the beginning of baseball, players have chewed tobacco, using the tobacco juice to settle the infield dust, soften their gloves, and make spitballs. It's said that some players spit so much they showed up as a scattered-shower on the weather radar. These days, though, it's more likely you'll see a player spitting sunflower seed hulls on the dugout floor, because the players know and understand the dangers of tobacco.

Last, but not least, spitting has finally taken its rightful place as a competitive sport alongside ice hockey, table tennis, and javelin throwing. Every year, the International Cherry Pit Spitting Contest is held in Eau Claire, Michigan. Brian "Young Gun" Krause holds the coveted world distance record of 93 feet 6 ½ inches. And for those who don't like cherries, Lee Wheelis spit a watermelon seed 68 feet 9 1/8 inches during the Thump Spitting Competition in Luling, Texas. That's a world record, too.

Spitting Dos and Don'ts

- Think before you spit.
- Don't spit where people walk. It just lies there for others to step in.
- Don't spit on people. (It's an awful insult.)
- Don't spit into the wind.[8]

Consider This: Major League (1934-1945) baseball player Stanley George "Frenchy" Bordagaray, upon being suspended for spitting at an umpire, commented that the punishment "was more than I expectorated."

SWEARING

Swearing is the act of using words or expressions judged taboo by society. Using taboo words or expressions is referred to as swearing, cursing, cussing, vulgarity, and blasphemy. The words and expressions themselves are called profanities; expletives; obscenities; and dirty, four-letter, coarse, crude, foul, raunchy, or off-color words.

Swearing is aggressive, and for that reason, men tend to do it more than women. Swearing is the language of choice in many male-dominated settings, like construction sites and locker rooms. It fits well in rough-and-tumble settings and in the swagger culture of some young men, where it's important that they show off their budding manly abilities.

Harvard Psychologist Steven Pinker believes people swear in five different ways.[9]

How We Swear	When We Swear	What We Say
Cathartically	Sudden pain, frustration, or regret	Sh*t!
Abusively	Anger or aggressiveness	Eat sh*t!
Emphatically	Excitement or surprise	Holly sh*t!
Descriptively	Anger or the desire to be blatantly vivid	You look like sh*t!
Idiomatically	As a normal expression during conversation	What a pile of sh*t.

What is it about one word that makes it taboo when compared to a second word with the same meaning? Pinker believes it's because taboo words bring to mind the most vivid and disagreeable aspects of the subject at hand, rather than just pointing to it in a more neutral, less offensive way. *Sh*t*, for example, conjures up a far more unpleasant picture in our minds than does *feces*.

But that's not the only reason, according to Pinker. What gives taboo words their punch is their taboo status. The more

forbidden a word or phrase is, the more shocking when you use it. People treat words as taboo to the extent that everyone else treats them as taboo. So the next time you feel the urge to swear, remember the old proverb: *When in Rome, do as the Romans do*. You don't want to be the only person in the room who is swearing.

For every profane word or phrase you know, there's another that means the same and is less taboo. "Sh*t" has an amazing number of synonyms, each with its own unique use, some considered more or less profane depending on where you are, with whom you're talking, and the subject about which you're talking.

Taboo: *sh*t*
Harsh: *crap*
Less Offensive: *waste, fecal matter, muck*
Formal: *feces, excrement, defecation*
Children: *poop, poo, doody, Number 2*
Medical: *stool, bowl movement*
Engineering: *turd*
Large animals: *pies, chips*
Small animals: *droppings*
Scientific (animals): *scat, dung*
Agricultural (animals): *manure, guano*

People judge you by the language you use, and for good reason: your words reflect your character and intentions. With that in mind, here are some dos and don'ts to consider.

Swearing Dos and Don'ts

- Know when and where profanity is accepted—even expected.
- Learn the words and how to use them. *Holy large cow pie* just doesn't have the right ring to it.
- Don't use profanity too often. The words will lose their punch. It will lead people to believe that you're intellectually lazy, being unable to express yourself any other way.

FIDGETING

To fidget, from the late 17th century *fidge,* "to twitch," means to make small movements, especially of the hands or feet, due to nervousness, impatience, agitation, or boredom. If you ever find yourself bouncing your leg over and over, tapping your foot, spinning a ring on your finger, or squirming in your chair, you are fidgeting.

According to the experts, fidgeting is a symptom of no less than 35 illnesses and disorders, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, delirium, abdominal aortic aneurysm, heart attack, and dementia. An impressive list to be sure, but believe us when we say that if you suffer any of these maladies, fidgeting will not likely be the cornerstone of the diagnosis. More likely reasons for fidgeting are that you're simply nervous, you have lots of pent-up energy, or you're just plain bored.

People, young and old, fidget. But not overweight people, according to James A. Levine, M.D.[10] Dr. Levine and his colleagues, all from the Mayo Clinic, have found that obese people are naturally much less fidgety than lean people and spend at least 2 hours more each day sitting around. The extra motion afforded by fidgeting people is apparently enough to burn about 350 extra calories a day, according to Levine. This adds up to 10 to 30 pounds a year.

It has been widely reported that other people are jumping on the Levine bandwagon. They assert that his findings provide convincing evidence that desk jobs, car pools, suburban sprawl, and other environmental and lifestyle factors that discourage physical activity are to blame for obesity. It must be true. After all, have you ever seen a picture of a fat cave man?

Lastly, research by Dr. Karen Pine and her colleagues at the University of Hertfordshire found that children who were allowed to fidget with their hands performed better in memory and learning tests than those who were not allowed to move.[11] Dr. Pine and her team believe that

hand movements and gestures can help children think, speak, and learn.

So there you have it. Maybe fidgeting isn't a bad habit after all, just misunderstood. No matter what the facts, some people will always see fidgeting as a waste of energy and an irritation. Meanwhile, those inclined to fidget will continue to do so, all the while covertly stimulating their brains and burning calories.

Fidgeting Dos and Don'ts

- If a fidgeter you're not, be tolerant of those who are.
- If a fidgeter you are, be tolerant of those who aren't.

Cracking Your Knuckles

Knuckle, from the Middle English *knokel*, is the part of your finger at a joint where the bone is near the surface. Knuckles are handy. You can *knuckle down*, *knuckle under*, be a *knuckle dragger* or a *knucklehead*, and give someone a *knuckle sandwich*. Knuckles are great for rapping on windows and your sister's head to get her attention.

Knuckle cracking is the act of bending or pulling your fingers to produce a *popping* noise. Here's how it works. A thick clear lubricant called synovial fluid surrounds all the joints in your body. When you stretch or bend your finger to crack your knuckle, the bones in the joint pull apart. That reduces the pressure on the synovial fluid and bubbles form that expand and burst causing a popping noise. It's kind of like what happens when you open a can of soda.

Habitually pulling your joints beyond their normal physical range is not that good for them. Ligaments and joints aren't intended to be stretched over and over like that. Doctors generally agree that if you

crack your knuckles for years it can damage the soft tissue in your joints and reduce the strength of your grip.

POP MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND.

POP, RICE KRISPIES ELF

On the positive side, there's evidence of increased mobility in joints right after you pop them, although the short-term benefit probably isn't worth the potential long-term damage. Oh, and just for the record, there's no scientific evidence that cracking your knuckles causes arthritis.

Many people are irritated by the sound of popping knuckles. Others could care less. With that in mind, here are a few considerations when the urge to crack hits you.

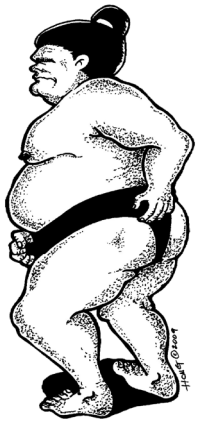
Knuckle Cracking Dos and Don'ts

- Refrain from cracking your knuckles—or any other joint for that matter—if someone around you doesn't like the sound.
- Avoid trying to crack your joints a second time for at least 30 minutes. It takes that long for the gas from the bubbles to re-dissolve into the joint fluid. Your joints won't make the popping noise again until then.

- Try stretching your fingers to relieve writer's fatigue instead of cracking them. Ah-h-h-h, that feels good…

Consider This: Not everybody's joints pop. Some people have too large a separation between the bones. Others can't relax enough to allow the bones to separate.

PICKING YOUR BUTT



Butt picking is the act of scratching, rubbing, grabbing, or pulling at your derrière with a specific end in mind. It's typically a desperate act of necessity to deal with either an intolerable itch or a clothing malfunction (your underwear has worked its way up your butt, for example).

The number one cause of butt picking is to relieve itching caused by irritated skin around your anus. In doctors' circles, the condition is called *pruritus ani*, from the Latin meaning *itchy anus*. In sufferers' circles, an itchy butt is not to be ignored. People scratch these itches because they have to, not because they want to. And the affliction's most vexing aspect is that the more you scratch, the worse it itches.

> HE WHO GOES TO BED WITH ITCHY BUTT WAKES UP WITH SMELLY FINGER.
>
> CONFUCIUS

There are a number of potential reasons for pruritus ani, including prolonged exposure to moisture and poop by-products (sweat, poop, diarrhea, and mucus); enzyme-producing foods that irritate your skin when you poop (caffeine, dairy products, tomatoes, and nuts); and skin irritants (dyed/scented toilet paper, soaps, and laundry detergent). If you suffer from an itchy butt, keep these facts in mind as they might help you avoid that maddening itch.

Close behind pruritus ani in the hit parade of reasons to pick your butt is the wedgie. Simply put, it's when your underwear or some other piece of clothing wedges between your butt cheeks. Underwear and ill-fitting pants, like gym shorts, can *ride up* your butt during physical activity or if they don't fit correctly. This malady is quite bothersome and is a major contributor to skid marks, those elongated poop stains that seem to magically appear in your underwear.

Some wedgies are purposely induced by crazed practical jokers that believe their lot in life is to grab the waistband of your

underwear and pull. These wedgies go by many names, including the Gold Standard (back pull), Melvin (front pull), Atomic (rear pull hoisting the waistband over the victim's head), and Atomic Melvin (you can figure this one out). Just for the record, wedgies are not that funny if you're on the receiving end. Our advice on this entire matter is to choose your friends wisely and keep a keen eye over your shoulder for potential perpetrators.

Butt Picking Dos and Don'ts

- Be discreet. Butt picking is a private matter.
- Go for outside-the-underwear butt picks first. There's no reason to go inside your underwear if outside does the job.
- Wash your hands after performing inside-the-underwear butt picks.
- Keep your butt clean.
- Don't suffer from itchy butt. See your doctor or try some of the fixes available at the drug store.
- Don't attempt Atomic and Atomic Melvin wedgies at home. They are for trained professionals only.

Missing the Toilet

Okay guys, your penis (we'll call him *Little Johnny* for now) extends out from your body, and he's flexible. You would think his physical attributes make urinating with pinpoint precision possible. But, who among us can legibly write his name in a snow bank or in the sand, let alone hit the pot every time we pee? Alas, no one.

Some people believe Little Johnny has a mind of his own; that no matter where you aim, Little Johnny goes wherever he wants. The cold hard fact is that if you stand while urinating, there's a better than 50-50 chance you'll pee on the toilet seat, the floor, or your feet. Here are the reasons why planning and preparation won't improve the odds.

> If Little Johnny's owner is distracted while urinating, it's anyone's guess where the pee will end up. It is imperative to keep your concentration at all times.

If Little Johnny is the victim of practical jokers who slap his owner on the back (or butt) while urinating, the aim can go disastrously awry.

If Little Johnny has been lying twisted in your underwear the opening where urine exits can be temporarily deformed causing a very unpredictable aim.

If Little Johnny isn't circumcised, the foreskin can cause turbulence in the stream as it leaves the urethra making the aim more difficult.

If Little Johnny is temporarily plugged with un-discharged semen there can be an unexpected surge of urine (think of a dam breaking) that can end up just about anywhere.

If Little Johnny is lucky enough to hit the target, toilet water mixed with urine (and everything else that goes into the toilet) can splash everywhere.

STAND UP CLOSE. THE NEXT MAN MAY BE BAREFOOT.

ANONYMOUS

You and Little Johnny can find yourselves with a pee problem on your hands for any of these or a myriad of other reasons. Obviously, accident-free peeing isn't as easy as some people would have you believe. Here's a cookbook approach to

help improve the chances you'll have a successful trip to the men's room.

9-Step Pee Program

1. Raise the lid and seat. Females using the toilet after you appreciate this gesture.
2. Stand as close as you can without touching the bowl. If someone before you has urinated on the floor don't stand in the puddle. Particularly if you are barefoot or have a hole in your shoe.
3. Aim to minimize splashing. To confirm the sweet spot, check it while wearing shorts. This is especially important for urinals. You will know immediately if you have it correct.
4. Pee. Take your time. It's not a race.
5. Squeeze and shake the final drops from Little Johnny. If you shake him more than three times, you're playing with him.
6. Put Little Johnny away.
7. Use toilet paper to wipe up your handiwork. Move quickly lest the urine soak through the paper to your hand.
8. Lower the seat and lid and then flush. Flushing with the lid up sprays microscopic water particles and other particulates (very small particles) into the air and onto you. Use your imagination as to what might be mixed

in toilet water. (When using a urinal, flush, stand back, and hope for the best.)

9. Wash up. No exceptions.

Consider This: The only sure-fire way to avoid peeing pitfalls is to sit while doing the deed. If you go down this path, don't forget to check the seat.

NOT WASHING UP

Hygiene, from the Greek *hugieine*, "art of health," is the conditions and practices conducive to maintaining health and preventing disease, especially through cleanliness. So, you ask, "Why do I need to wash my hands after going to the bathroom or cleaning out the litter box?" The answer is germs.

Hand washing is simple, and when done correctly, it's one of the best ways to stay healthy. All that's required is soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. As easy as it is, many people don't wash their hands as often as they should, even after using the bathroom.

Not to be too melodramatic, but germs are everywhere. You get them on your hands from things you touch. Once the germs are on your hands, all you have to do

is touch your eyes, nose, or mouth to expose yourself to them and get sick. You can spread the germs to other people by touching them or by touching surfaces they touch, like door handles, stall doors in public bathrooms, faucet handles, and flush levers of all shapes and sizes.

Everything from colds to infectious diarrhea is spread through hand-to-hand contact. Food-related illnesses, like salmonella and E. coli infection, also are spread when people don't keep their hands clean. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as many as 76 million Americans get a food-borne illness each year resulting in nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. About 5,000 of these people die as a direct result of their illness.

Makes you think. What did you touch today—maybe your friend's cell phone (which he handed you right after he sneezed into his hand), the toilet seat at the movie theater, or your cat's pooper-scooper when you cleaned out his litter box? Maybe you picked your nose? (You wouldn't do that, would you?) You get the picture.

Whatever you do, you come into contact with germs, and it's easy for germs *on* your hands to end up *in* you.

Just to prove that most misery is self-inflicted, Harris Interactive® conducted a study of hand washing habits for the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) and The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA).[12] They looked at 6,336 people who used the public bathrooms at six public attractions in four major cities: Atlanta (Turner Field), Chicago (Museum of Science and Industry, Shedd Aquarium), New York City (Grand Central Station, Penn Station), and San Francisco (Ferry Terminal Farmers Market). When asked, 96% of men said they always washed their hands after using public restrooms, but just 75% were seen doing so. About 80% said they washed their hands after using the bathroom at home. Yeah, right.

In a separate telephone survey of 1,013 American adults, the ASM found that:

> 68% don't wash their hands after coughing or sneezing. Think about that the next time your buddy hands you a

pizza slice after sneezing into his hands a few times.

58% don't wash their hands after petting a dog or cat. You've seen your cat roll around in his litter box, right? Need we say more?

79% don't wash up after handling money. Ever wonder where that five-dollar bill's been?

And our personal favorite: 27% don't wash their hands after changing a baby's diaper. If you've never taken on this daunting task, try it, and you'll know why this statistic is so remarkable (in a bad way).

It all sounds grim. But, don't forget your body has an immune system that takes care of most germs to which you're exposed. Trouble is, it doesn't get them all. That's why washing your hands is so important.

Not Washing Up Dos and Don'ts

- In public bathrooms, turn off the water with a paper towel to avoid getting germs on your clean hands. Use the same towel to open the door. Door handles are great germ carriers.
- Use a hand-sanitizing wipe or gel when you can't wash up with soap and water.

Peeing Outdoors

In Brussels, Belgium, there is a small bronze sculpture of a naked little boy. His name is Manneken Pis (Little Man Piss). Legend has it that many years ago the young son of a local merchant was lost somehow. After searching for two days, the wayward child was found peeing in an alleyway not far from his home. His thankful father immortalized the occasion by erecting a fountain statue of his son just as he was found: peeing on the ground.

Manneken Pis aside, society generally expects you to pee in a toilet or urinal once you're potty trained. The trouble with that expectation is that people have been peeing outdoors since we arrived here. And such ingrained habits are hard to break. Peeing outdoors is purely and simply a liberating experience, not to mention it's quite convenient, especially for men.

When it comes to urinating outside, it's generally more acceptable to pee in the countryside than on Main Street. It's simply a matter of sanitation and public health. Imagine the smell and filth if everyone in

Manhattan urinated whenever and wherever he or she pleased. To improve sanitation and living conditions for its citizens, even the Romans had public toilets in the 1st century A.D.

Even so, public restrooms are sometimes so dirty and poorly maintained it's more sanitary to urinate outdoors. Remember, though, that public urination is a crime in many places. If you get caught, you could be charged with littering, public nuisance, indecent exposure, or even disorderly conduct. Know the rules where you are. Don't get caught with your pants down.

When choosing a location to pee outdoors, discretion is the better part of valor. The more people there are around you, the less acceptable it is to urinate outside. Here are some dos and don'ts when you find yourself with no option but to pee outside or in your pants.

Peeing Outdoors Dos and Don'ts

- Pick an isolated place where you're not likely to be interrupted, preferably away from other people.

- Shield yourself from view behind a tree, in an alleyway, or between two open car doors.
- Pee in a place where rain will wash it away. Covered parking garages don't qualify.
- Don't pee into the wind. You will regret it.
- Don't pee on electric fences. Urine conducts electricity.
- Remember that pee kills grass and shrubbery. Be selective about location.
- Don't let your body language betray your actions; in other words, don't stare at your stream.
- Take out your shirttail for a quick cover up if needed. Be careful not to pee on it.
- Be vigilant.

THROWING GUM ON THE SIDEWALK

Chewing gum is a type of confection traditionally made from tree sap, like chicle from the sapodilla tree native to Central and South America. Natural chicle is a type of rubber that softens as it warms in your mouth. Like a mouthful of rubber bands, the chicle doesn't dissolve when you chew it.

Nowadays, for reasons of quality and economy, most chewing gum is made from an artificial, man-made chicle or synthetic rubber known as polyisobutylene. You should know that polyisobutylene also is used to make adhesives, agricultural chemicals, fiber optic compounds, caulk, sealant, two-cycle engine oil, paper, and it's used as a gasoline/diesel fuel additive. Sounds tasty!

Chewing on a piece of rubber isn't very appealing, of course. So the people that make chewing gum mix the rubber with sugar and flavorings, like cinnamon, mint, wintergreen, and all kinds of fruit. When you chew it, the rubber releases the flavor into your mouth. M-m-m-m.

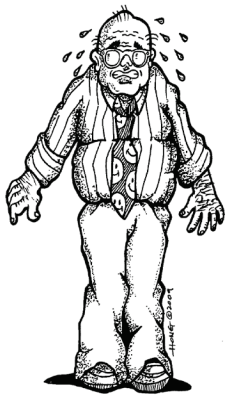
Once the flavor is gone, now what? Chewing gum can't be recycled like a plastic milk jug. It has no redeeming quality or use once the flavor is gone. Likely this is why so much of it ends up on the sidewalk and the bottom of your shoes, not to mention the underside of chairs and tables.

Chewing Gum Dos and Don'ts

- Chew with your mouth closed. You are not a cud-chewing cow.
- Avoid making noises as you chew. Cracking and popping noises are for July 4th celebrations, not gum chewing.
- Don't swallow your gum. It contains none of your required daily allowances of vitamins and minerals.
- Wrap your ABC (Already Been Chewed) gum in paper and dispose of it in a waste container.

Consider This: Contrary to what you've heard, swallowed gum does not remain in your stomach for seven years, although it does stay on the bottom of your shoe for about that long.

NOT WEARING DEODORANT



B.O. can mean many things, including box office, bowel obstruction, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, bacterial overgrowth, and the Born-Oppenheimer approximation in physics. It's also the name of a language spoken by the Bo people of Laos, a French rugby club, and a German rock band.

B.O., as in body odor, also known as *bromhidrosis*, is what you get if you don't keep your body clean. Here's how it happens. You sweat when your body overheats or you get stressed. That sweat contains proteins and carbohydrates that mix with the bacteria on your skin and, voilá, you have B.O. Bathing washes away the bacteria and helps *control* the smell.

Some B.O. has a pleasant smell, giving us all a unique and hopefully beguiling odor. And here's the best part: B.O. can be used to identify people, though dogs more often do this than do humans. Still, it might be fun to try.

Okay, now let's talk armpits. They are by nature a particularly bad smelling area. And that's where deodorant comes in. About all we can say about armpits is that if they smell—and you'll know without a doubt when they do—wash them, buy deodorant, and use it.

> I USE A STICK,
> YOU USE A SPRAY,
> THEY BOTH KEEP
> GIRLS FROM
> RUNNING AWAY.
>
> ANONYMOUS

B.O. is one result of poor personal hygiene practices; that is, the things you do for your personal health and well-being. Besides smelly armpits, poor hygiene will get you stinky feet, bad breath, and rotten teeth, not to mention a generally disheveled look because you don't trim your nails or wash and comb your hair. If any of this sounds familiar, consider these dos and don'ts. Friends—particularly girlfriends—will be glad you did.

Personal Hygiene Dos and Don'ts

- Stock up on soap, shampoo, dental floss, a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, nail clippers, mouthwash, a razor, shaving cream, and lest we forget, toilet paper.
- Use them!

PEEING IN THE POOL

Relieving oneself while swimming, floating, or standing in a pool of chlorinated water is a time-honored tradition for young and old alike. Of more than 2,400 respondents to the Pee Pool Poll[13], 54% said they pee in private swimming pools and 82% pee in public swimming pools.

Why pee in the pool? You have to admit it's a hassle to get out of the water, find a towel, dry off, and shuffle over to the men's room. Frankly, many people like peeing in the pool because they say it feels good. The chlorine will take care of it, right?

Well, maybe it does, and maybe it doesn't. So, you ask, just what exactly is in pool water? Here's the good: chlorine to kill the germs and chemicals to control the pH. Here's the bad: outside debris (dirt, bugs, and bird droppings) and material from swimmers' bodies (sweat, saliva, mucus, and suntan oil). Here's the ugly: urine and human feces. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta (CDC), people on average have about 0.14 grams of feces (spelled p-o-o-p)

on their butts that washes off and contaminates the water when they're swimming.

Sometimes mixed in with this brew of bugs, sweat, spit, snot, pee, and poop is cryptosporidium, a parasite that causes diarrhea. Chorine kills most organisms in a fraction of a second, but it takes up to seven days to kill cryptosporidium. A few other swimming partners that give chlorine a run for the money are Escherichia coli (bacterium), Giardia lamblia (parasite), and Shigella (bacterium), none of which are good for you.

> YOU CAN'T DIVE IN THE TOILET, BUT YOU CAN PEE IN THE POOL.
>
> ANONYMOUS

So, here's the poop on pool water: chlorine kills germs, but it takes time, and it doesn't kill everything. Before going in, make sure the water looks clean, clear, and blue; the sides of the pool are not slippery or sticky; and there is no strong smell of chlorine. A very strong chlorine-like smell can mean that chloramines are present. Chloramines are chemicals made up of chlorine mixed with lotions, sweat, saliva, mucus, urine, and feces.

Peeing in the Pool Dos and Don'ts

- Don't pee in swimming pools.
- Don't swallow pool water because, well, you know why.
- Pee before going in the water and take frequent bathroom breaks. (Don't forget to wear flip-flops to the bathroom or risk standing barefoot in someone's urine.)
- Shower before swimming.
- Take personal responsibility for keeping the pool clean.

Consider This: If you were meant to pee in the pool, there would be a special "peeing section."

And This: Peeing in a lake or the ocean is okay as long as you're discreet. After all, that's where fish go.

Walking With Your Back to Traffic

The word pedestrian, from the Latin *pedester*, "going on foot," means a person walking along a road or in a developed area. People don't walk as much as they used to. "Why walk when you can drive?" says my friend, Mike.

As a result of all this driving about, the knowledge of how to be a good pedestrian is disappearing. It's not uncommon these days to see people walking in the street with their backs to traffic. Even when there are sidewalks, they still choose to share the road with cars and trucks. That's risky behavior unless they have eyes in the back of their heads.

As a first step to being an informed pedestrian, let's talk physics. Physics, of course, is the branch of science concerned with the nature and properties of matter and energy. It comes into play when two objects collide—like your body and a car. The average adult weighs 155 pounds, and the average car weighs 4,000 pounds. With a little imagination, you can see the likely result. Cars always win.

Walking in the street is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to bad pedestrian habits that will get you killed. Add to the list everything from stepping into the street from between two parked cars to jaywalking. To help you get off on the right foot, here are a few dos and don'ts to consider the next time you're hoofing it.

Pedestrian Dos and Don'ts

- Stay close to the edge and *face* traffic when walking on a road with no sidewalks so drivers can see you and you can see them. Make sure you have room to step off the road as cars pass. Walk in single file if you're in a group.
- Don't step into the road from between parked cars. People can't see you.
- Cross at the corner, not in the middle of the block.
- Cross with traffic. If there's a traffic light, wait until it's green. Just because the light's green doesn't mean it's safe. Look first.
- Never walk diagonally across an intersection, otherwise known as "jaywalking."
- Take the shortest route when crossing the road—straight across.
- Wear bright colored or reflective clothing at dusk and at night.

- Avoid walking in tunnels, on expressways, and on railroad tracks. They are especially dangerous places because no one expects to see you there.
- Walk on the sidewalk instead of the road when there's a choice.
- Use common sense.

EATING—EATING—EATING

You can eat in, eat out, eat crow, eat dirt, eat humble pie, and eat your words. You can eat dust, eat your heart out, and be eaten up inside. You can also be eaten out of house and home. That's a lot of eating. No wonder America has an obesity problem.

Let's start with your stomach. It is, after all, the first stop for everything you eat. Your stomach is a muscular, elastic, pear-shaped bag, lying crosswise in your abdominal cavity just beneath your diaphragm. It changes size and shape depending on the position of your body and the amount of food that's in it. Adults' stomachs are about 12 inches long and 6 inches wide at their widest point. A fully loaded adult stomach holds about 2 to 3 pints of food and drink.

Now that it's on the table, let's talk about food. We're bombarded from morning until night with choices over what and how much we eat. Everywhere you turn there are candy bars, chips, cookies, sugar cereals, and prepared meals with loads of sugar, fat, and salt. There are also fruits and vegetables available, but how often do you see them in the checkout lane at the grocery or in a vending machine?

> YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT.
>
> ANONYMOUS

These days there are chain restaurants specializing in everything from hamburgers to pizza to Tex-Mex. Look at the following chart. Consider the details of what you're eating. Aside from the big dose of sugar, fat, and salt, would this one meal even fit into a 2 to 3 pint stomach all at once?

Food	Fat/ % Daily	Sodium/ % Daily	Calories/ % Daily
Chips and Hot Sauce	36 gm 55%	2590mg 108%	480 24%
Bleu Cheese Bacon Burger	71gm 109%	2070mg 86%	1090 55%
Homestyle Fries	26gm 40%	250mg 10%	430 22%

Food	Fat/ % Daily	Sodium/ % Daily	Calories/ % Daily
Large Classic Coca-Cola	0	5mg <0.1%	214 11%
Choc Chip Cookie Cake	64gm 98%	680mg 28%	1240 62%
TOTALS	**197gm 302%**	**5595mg 124%**	**3454 173%**

Pediatrician and academician David A. Kessler, M. D., believes that eating sugar, fat, and salt makes us eat more sugar, fat, and salt.[14] He observes that the food and restaurant industries dish out great-tasting, big-serving, bad-for-us food, not just because the food is profitable, but also because we demand it. According to Kessler, we demand it because we're hooked on it; in other words, it's a habit.

Eating Dos and Don'ts

- Think about what you put in your mouth.
- Don't eat more calories than you burn.
- Change the way you think, and it will change the way you eat.
- Break the sugar-fat-salt cycle one food at a time.

Not Opening Doors for Others

Chivalry, from the Old French *chevalerie*, is related to the medieval institution of knighthood. It's usually associated with the ideas of knightly virtues, honor, and courtly love. Today, chivalry is used to describe courteous behavior, especially that of a man toward women.

Showing politeness in your attitude and behavior toward others is not always missed in today's busy world, but it's almost always appreciated. For no other reason than it just makes things more pleasant, here are a few standard courtesies to see you through the day.

> Courteous men learn courtesy from the discourteous.
>
> Persian Proverb

After you. These days the door swings both directions: women open doors for men just as much as men do for women. When you and a stranger get to a door at the same time, it's courteous for you to open and hold it. Never let a door close on the person behind you after you've just walked through.

May I? When out with a young woman, whether you open doors and hold chairs for her depends on what she wants. It's best to ask, "May I get the door for you?" or "Can I hold your chair?" That way you don't have to guess.

May I? (Scene 2) Most young women today aren't of a mind to sit in the car while you walk around it to open the door for them. Nor are they likely to get into a steaming hot car in August and wait while you go around, get in, start it up, and wait for the air conditioning to come on. Still, it's always best to offer. And you'll be surprised the good impression it will make.

Who's First? Men usually enter a revolving door first if it isn't moving. Women go first if it's already in motion. When entering and exiting elevators, whoever's in front goes first.

Stand on the right, walk on the left. Keep to the right when riding an escalator so other people can walk past you. If you want to pass someone, just say, "excuse me" or "on your left." But, be patient and stay where you are if the escalator is crowded.

Tipping your hat. Generally speaking, it's always good form to take off your hat (this includes baseball caps) upon entering a building. It should also come off while you're in a home, indoors at work (unless it's required), while seated at the dining table, at a movie or other indoor performance, when the national anthem is played, and when the flag of the United States passes by (like in a parade). You can leave your hat on when outdoors, at athletic events (indoors and out), at religious services (as appropriate), and in public buildings (airports and train stations).

Looking out for the fairer sex. When walking along a street with a young woman, men usually walk on the curbside. This practice comes from the idea that men should shield women from the hazards posed by passing traffic (originally horse-and-buggies).

Looking out for the fairer sex. (Scene 2) When out and about with a young lady, it's always best to lead the way across difficult-to-walk areas, like wet slippery ramps and rough ground. Also, as necessary, take her hand as you pass through crowds. If you're

on a date, this is a great excuse to hold hands, even if briefly.

Walk this way. At restaurants, when the maitre d' seats you and a young woman for dinner, she should walk directly behind the maitre d', with you behind her. In a larger mixed group of young men and women, all the women should precede the men.

Arm-in-arm. It used to be common to see men and women walking arm-in-arm. These days it seems only to happen at weddings and formal dinner parties, like the prom. Even though it's not the norm, it's still the polite thing to do from time to time. Try it. You may like it.

Can you hear me? It's not the act of using your cell phone in public that upsets people but how you conduct yourself. Make sure your conversation intrudes as little as possible on those around you. One option is to cup your hand over your mouth and talk softly. You'll likely never hear another complaint. Oh, and don't forget to turn down the ringer.

Losing Your Temper

Temper, from the Latin *temperare*, means a person's state of mind in terms of being angry or calm. You can *keep your temper* or *lose your temper*. You can have a *short temper* or a *fit of temper*. It's up to you. Here's what we mean.

The stimulus: Parker, a guy in your neighborhood, says something insulting about you. Your response: You react angrily, threatening to "punch him out." Checkmate. You lose.

"He made me mad," you tell your friend. Well, that's not how it works. Parker didn't *make* you mad. You *decided* to get mad. Think about it. In the time between Parker's comment (the stimulus) and your threat (the response), you *chose* to get angry and threaten him.

How you act—and react—is always your choice. No one makes the decision for you. One option is to put your emotions on autopilot and react without thinking. That's what happened when you had that knee-jerk response to Parker's comment. Not good.

HE WHO ANGERS YOU CONQUERS YOU.

ELIZABETH KENNY

People operate either emotionally or rationally. Emotional-based people rely on their feelings to make decisions. They blame their behavior on other people or circumstances and conditions outside their control. "I'm in a bad mood today because it's raining," they say.

Logic-based people depend on facts to make decisions. They take responsibility for their actions, making conscious decisions based on their values, rather than their feelings. The fact that it's raining doesn't affect their mood.

Taking responsibility for your moods—including anger—seems impossible. You want to yell at the person who left his gym locker open and on which you hit your head. But will that really help? No. Losing your temper rarely solves the problem.

The next time you feel yourself getting hot under the collar, try these ways to keep your cool.

Pause. Resist knee-jerk reactions.

Think. Don't jump to conclusions.

Understand. Put the problem in perspective.

Respond. Focus on the problem, not the person.

Losing Your Temper Dos and Don'ts

- Take responsibility for your moods.
- Don't make a habit of losing your temper.
- Remember Aristotle's words, "Anyone can get angry; that's all too easy. But the challenge is to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way."

CALLING PEOPLE NAMES

Name-calling is when one person uses a negative label to describe another person. Young people call each other "stupid," "moron," and "idiot." Adults call children "rude," "lazy," and "selfish." Adults call each other "meatheads," "bums," and "rednecks." Everyone seems to do it.

Name-calling, an *ad hominem* attack, is a type of bullying. Ad hominem attacks appeal to a person's emotions and beliefs rather than their ability to think. The purpose of the attack is to connect a negative concept with a person. By linking someone to a negative symbol, the person doing the name calling hopes the other person will be rejected on the basis of the symbol, rather than the facts.

> STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES, BUT WORDS CAN ALSO HURT ME.
>
> BARRIE WADE

Name-calling is a powerful influence on how people think and what they do. It's almost always used to achieve negative ends, like causing conflict, ruining reputations, and influencing decision making through prejudice and fear.

When words are used to describe someone—whether it's you or someone else—think about what you're hearing and how you react. (See *Losing Your Temper.*) Are the words being used in a positive or negative way? You can recognize negative words because they give new, uncomplimentary meanings to existing words (butthead, for example) or they use taboo words to describe a person. (See *Swearing*.)

The next time you feel like calling someone a name, try expressing your feelings without attaching a negative label. Instead, replace the negative label with a word meaning the exact opposite. For example, instead of saying, "You're stupid." Say, "I don't like your idea." Or, "I disagree." Here are a few more ideas to consider:

"You're rude" changes to "Please be polite."

"You act like a baby" changes to "Let's be mature about this."

"You're mean" changes to "Please be nice."

You get the idea. With a little practice, using positive words is easy and a whole lot better than their negative counterparts. There's an old expression: you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. It's true.

Name-calling Dos and Don'ts

- Be respectful.
- Be considerate.
- Make sure you're brain is in gear before your mouth starts running.
- Choose your words carefully.
- Think before you let a name influence what you believe.
- Make it a rule that you don't call people names.

Bragging

Bragging, from the French *braguer,* is to speak in a boastful manner. Also known as *tooting your own horn*, bragging is generally looked down upon in social circles. Here's what we mean.

> Tell me what you brag about and I'll tell you what you lack.
>
> Spanish Proverb

Let's say you live in an exclusive part of town, you're a member of the country club, and you drive a Ferrari. You're understandably proud of what you have to show for your accomplishments. If you asked your friends, they'd say you define yourself by where you live and what you drive. After all, what you talk about most is *you*.

Rather than an *if-you've-got-it-flaunt-it* attitude, why not try another approach? For example, say you want to tell someone about that great car you own—more likely a souped-up Chevy Malibu than a Ferrari—but you're proud of it nonetheless. Instead of telling the person directly, discuss cars in general and wait for them to ask what you drive.

Answer matter-of-factly. Don't go overboard by using the question as a springboard to pontificate: boast, that is. Bragging makes a lot of people feel small, in this case because they don't drive as nice a car as you do. The implicit comparison between yours and theirs is what causes the rub.

It's also not just what you say; it's how you say it. Being part of a discussion where everyone gets a chance to talk, as opposed to dominating the conversation with talk about yourself, sends a signal that you're a person of substance. People will see there's more to you than simply a car, house, country club, and talk.

To make this work, you have to strike a balance. You want to be heard without being verbose, you want to be noticed without being a show-off, and you want credit without being pushy. So how's it done? These dos and don'ts will help get you on your way.

Bragging Dos and Don'ts

- Impress people by what you do. Actions speak louder than words.
- Tactfully take credit where credit is due. Then move on.
- Stop comparing. Enjoy being yourself without worrying so much about whether you're better or worse than others.
- Feel good about yourself. Nurture your self-esteem by recognizing your talents and qualities.
- Accept people for who they are. Recognize their talents and qualities without judging them.
- Treat people as equals. They are just that, after all is said and done.
- Cut the B.S.

COMPLAINING

Complaining, from the Medieval Latin *complangere*: *com*, "bewail" + *plangere*, "to lament," means to express dissatisfaction or annoyance about a state of affairs or an event. A discussion about complaining wouldn't be complete without mentioning its first cousin, whining. From the Old English *whinan*, "whistle through the air," whining means to complain in a feeble or petulant way. Combining those two words, as in a "whining complainer," certainly doesn't paint a very complimentary picture.

> IT IS THE GROWLING MAN WHO LIVES A DOG'S LIFE.
>
> COLEMAN COX

People complain about anything that doesn't meet their approval. Fact is, almost everyone complains at one time or another. It just feels too good not to. Here are some of the reasons we complain:

We want our emotions validated. "I'm depressed. What does she see in him?"

We want sympathy. "My allergies are really bad today."

We need help or want a problem fixed. "Why does Mrs. Brown wait until the end of class to hand out assignments? What's her problem?"

We want to vent over our powerlessness. "The light's green! Why doesn't that guy go?" (See *Losing Your Temper*.)

Fact is we don't have any control over most of the things we complain about. Take the weather, for example. Nothing we say will influence whether it rains or shines. Complaining about the weather seems kind of pointless when you think about it.

With that in mind, here are a few dos and don'ts to consider.

<u>Complaining Dos and Don'ts</u>

- Be on the lookout for situations where you complain.
- Ask yourself if complaining will change things.
- If not, don't waste your breath.

BEING A KNOW-IT-ALL

You can *know your way around*, *know a thing or two*, *know the ropes*, and *know your stuff*. A *know-it-all*, though, is someone who puts on airs over his self-importance, especially a person whose instructive-type conversational style is meant to show off his superior knowledge.

Famous know-it-alls include God, Hypocrites, Julius Caesar, and Mr. Know-It-All, aka Bullwinkle J. Moose. Deities, philosophers, and cartoon characters aside, know-it-alls are easily identifiable by what they say. If you hear, "I told you, but you didn't listen," or "Yeah, I already knew that," you're probably talking with one.

> THE ONLY THINGS WORTH LEARNING ARE THE THINGS YOU LEARN AFTER YOU KNOW IT ALL.
>
> HARRY S. TRUMAN

These run-of-the-mill, garden-variety know-it-alls, sometimes referred to as smart alecs, know everything about everything at all times—or so they would have you believe. They're typically thought of as bombastic, opinionated, and bad listeners. Know-it-alls can pontificate ad

infinitum on any subject. It drives some people crazy.

To be fair, know-it-alls sometimes have lots to offer, and, like most people, they're generally competent. But, they can't stand to be contradicted or corrected. A know-it-all lacks the humility to say, "I don't know enough about that to have an opinion," or "You may be right."

As communicators, know-it-alls are good at giving and bad at receiving. They don't take input well. Their rambling treatises have the effect of putting people down. By implication, if they know everything, you know nothing. Or at least that's how it can make you feel.

For a little fun the next time you're suffering at the hands of a know-it-all, ask them this question and see if they know the answer: *According to the Heisenberg Indeterminacy Principle of quantum mechanics, what two properties of a system cannot be simultaneously determined with arbitrarily small uncertainties?* The answer is—drum roll: *position* and *momentum*. Okay, we admit that's a juvenile way of

dealing with know-it-alls. Instead, consider these dos and don'ts.

Know-It-All Dos and Don'ts

- Always have the facts when talking with a know-it-all.
- Assumptions, estimates, and hunches don't carry any weight with them.
- Be specific when asking questions of a know-it-all, lest they go off on a frustrating, counterproductive tangent.
- Avoid directly challenging a know-it-all's facts or interpretation of the facts. Best to just listen and move on—or simply excuse yourself and leave.
- Remember that know-it-alls don't know everything and that you can contribute, too.
- Look yourself in the mirror. If you're a know-it-all, fess up, and change.

Not Listening

Listen, from the Old English *hlysnan*, "pay attention to," means literally to give ones attention to a sound. You can *listen to* and you can *listen in* if you want to know what's going on.

Conversation requires two things: talking (duh!) and listening. Listening? How can you listen *and* get ready for what you're going to say next both at the same time? Whether you realize it or not, you and everybody else does exactly that. It only gets to be a problem when you think so hard about what to say next that you don't hear a thing the other person's saying.

> We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.
>
> Epictetus

In many ways, conversation is like walking—one step at a time—except in conversation, you're taking one thought at a time. When you're talking with someone, clear your mind of other thoughts and concentrate hard on what they're saying. Make eye contact, nodding your head, and saying, "I see" or "Um-huh" every once in a

while to show you're listening. Practice empathetic listening by saying, "Let me see if I understand your point," then reword and play back what you heard and see if they agree. The give-and-take of a good conversation will just happen if you practice these techniques.

It always pays to be thoughtful during conversation, too. For example, think about the topic being discussed. Is it of interest to everyone involved? If a nuclear engineer really thought about it, would she wax on and on about reactor core physics to a Wall Street stockbroker? Would a stay-at-home dad talk endlessly about the pros and cons of after-school childcare to someone who's never had children? Always consider the other person's interests in whatever topic you put on the table for discussion.

Lastly, a comment about interrupting: there's a very fine line between interrupting to confirm a point and interrupting because you just can't wait to put in your two cents. The only time it's okay to interrupt in the middle of a sentence is when you need to say something that honestly can't wait. Even

then, begin with "I'm sorry to interrupt" or some similar apology.

A good conversationalist knows that what they say and how they say it makes the difference between giving comfort or being offensive, being clear or causing confusion, and showing others they're a friendly, thoughtful person—or a small-minded, long-winded boor.

Not Listening Dos and Don'ts

- Listen first.
- Think next.
- Talk last.

LITTERING

Litter, from the Latin *lectus*, "bed," is a very versatile word with many meanings. There is cat litter, leaf litter, litters on which sick and wounded people are carried, and litters of kittens. The pages of this book are littered with facts, animals bed down on litter (straw), and long ago, important people were carried on litters on the shoulders of men. But, of course, we're not talking about any of these.

For our purposes, litter*ing* is the act of throwing, dropping, or leaving paper, cans, and bottles—otherwise known as trash—in open or public places. No matter how careful you are or how hard you try not to, we all produce trash every day. Some is recycled, some is burned, some is buried in landfills, and the rest turns into litter.

> ONE MAN'S TRASH IS ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE.
>
> ANONYMOUS

According to statistics, fast food trash makes up 33% of litter. Close behind is

paper at 29%, aluminum cans at 28%, glass bottles at 6%, and plastic at 2%. So, how long does it take for litter to disappear, or decompose, on its own? Consider these facts the next time you throw a trash-filled Mickey-D bag out of the car window.

Object	Time to Decompose
Styrofoam container	More than 1 million years
Plastic jug	1 million years
Aluminum can	200-500 years
Disposable diaper	550 years
Tin can	90 years
Paper bag	1 month
Banana peel	3-4 weeks

People litter for different reasons. Sometimes it's by accident, like when a wrapper falls out of your pocket before you have the chance to throw it away. Other times, it's because people are too lazy to take their trash to a container. Either way, here are some good reasons to make the effort and not litter.

Litter is ugly. We asked around and couldn't find anyone that likes litter.

Litter hurts animals. Did you know that small animals crawl into bottles or jars, get stuck, and starve to death? Also, fish and birds get tangled up in plastic six-pack rings, plastic bags, and fishing line and die from infections or are strangled.

Litter spreads disease. Did you know that paper cups and beverage cans collect rainwater and can be breeding grounds for mosquitoes that cause West Nile virus and malaria?

Litter is expensive. As an example, the Virginia Department of Transportation spends about $7 million cleaning up litter every year. Think about how much it costs all over the world.

Littering Dos and Don'ts

- Don't litter. Put trash where it belongs.
- Speak up if you see a friend litter.
- If you see litter, pick it up and throw it away.

Consider This: The best thing about litter is that you can stop it.

Lying

A lie, also known as a prevarication, is when a person knowingly says something that's not true. You can tell bald-faced lies, bare-faced lies, bold-faced lies, or little white lies. You can lie to yourself, you can lie to other people, and you can lie through your teeth. You can be a pathological liar, a habitual liar, or just a plain old liar.

> Lying is done with words and also with silence.
>
> Adrienne Rich

Lies come in all shapes and sizes. On one end of the spectrum are malicious lies, like bold-faced lies. These are things people say to avoid being punished, to get out of doing something, to impress someone, or to make them feel more important. On the other end of the spectrum are little white lies. People tell little white lies to avoid hurting someone's feelings. To be polite, that is.

Good social etiquette sometimes requires recognizing when respect and kindness demand that you shade the naked truth. These little white lies, as they're known, are not malicious. Telling your

friend the pimple on his nose doesn't look bad when you really think it looks like Mt. Everest is a little white lie. Telling your parents you're spending the night at a friend's house and then going somewhere else is not.

A popular much-used little white lie is when you ask people how they are and they say, "Great!" Sometimes they are "great," but even when they're not, they still say they are. Ergo, a little white lie. Which, by the way, is more times than not the right response since no one really wants to hear an honest accounting of the sordid details.

Malicious lies, on the other hand, destroy the trust between two people. That's why it hurts when your girlfriend tells you she was just out with friends, but you know she was on a date with someone else. Best to remember that malicious lies don't solve problems. With every lie you're gambling you won't get caught. But, chances are you will and then things will be worse than if you hadn't lied in the first place. Lying damages what others think of you and what you think of yourself.

There is also a kind of lie told by those who care for us, like our parents and grandparents. These "lies," although that may be too strong a word for them, are meant to stir our imaginations, share helpful tips, and discourage certain behaviors deemed inappropriate. They've been said so many times by so many people they must be true. Or are they?

Santa Claus is real, along with his buddy, the Tooth Fairy.

That noise in a seashell is the ocean.

Swimming after eating causes cramps.

The hair on your face grows faster and comes back thicker if you shave it.

Sitting on cold ground makes you sick.

Reading in dim light hurts your eyes.

Masturbating makes you blind.

Eating chocolate causes acne.

Touching frogs gives you warts.

Washing your hair too often makes it fall out.

Cramps, facial hair, and frogs aside, here are a few dos and don'ts to get you on your way.

Lying Dos and Don'ts

- Tell the truth.
- Be sensitive to people's feelings.
- Understand when it's okay to shade the naked truth and when it's not.

CHEATING

Cheating is the act of breaking the rules through dishonesty or deception. People cheat to give themselves an unfair advantage. You can cheat at cards, cheat on a test at school, cheat at sports, and some people even say you can cheat death. Well, maybe for a while you can cheat death.

It's cheating when an 11 year-old boy plays soccer on a 10-and-under team. Sure, he's the star player and his team comes in first, but it's not fair to anyone when he scores goal after goal.

It's cheating when you use someone else's idea for an English paper, copy your friend's homework, or sneak the answers to a math test into the room with you. And just so you'll know, using someone else's work, like a paper you found on the Internet, is cheating, too. It's called plagiarism.

Everyone will tell you cheating is wrong. But, it's still tempting because cheating makes things that are hard seem easy. If you ask people why they do it, here's what you'll hear:

"I want to win."

"I'm afraid of getting a bad grade."

"School is too hard."

"I don't have time to study."

"Everybody else cheats, too!"

Certain things tend to happen when you cheat. For one, it will make you feel bad about yourself, robbing you of confidence and self-respect. When people find out you cheated, they'll lose respect for you because cheating undermines trust. It doesn't feel good when people, like your teachers and friends, don't trust you.

Cheating can become a habit, but like many other bad habits, you can always choose to stop. Talk it over with a parent, teacher, or counselor. Choosing to play fair and to be honest will make you feel better about yourself. It's never too late to stop.

Cheating Dos and Don'ts

- Play fair.
- Don't cheat.

STEALING

Stealing, from the Old English *stelan*, is when one person takes another person's property without permission or legal right and without intending to return it. Depending on what you're after, you can steal a kiss, steal a base, steal the show, and even steal someone's heart.

Aside from bases, kisses, shows, and hearts (for which you may or may not be forgiven), stolen property can be as small as some pocket change or as big as a car. It can be taken from a friend or a stranger, from a store or someone's home. Bottom line is, no matter what it is or where it's from, if you take something that doesn't belong to you and someone didn't say you could have it, then it's stealing.

People steal for different reasons:

Peer pressure. Someone dares you to do it.

Jealousy. You want something someone else has.

Anger. You want to get even with someone.

Need. You don't have enough money for something you really need, like food.

Desire. You don't have enough money for something you really want, like a new skateboard. Or you want something you can't legally buy, like beer or cigarettes.

Embarrassment. You want something that you're embarrassed to buy, like a condom.

Fun. To show off and get a thrill.

Impulse. You see something you want, and you take it.

No matter the motivation, stealing causes lots of problems. Think about it. If you steal a computer game, the store's owner could tell you not to come back again, or he could call the police. If you've been caught stealing before, you'll probably have to go to court. No matter how you cut it, you'll have to return the game. It's a loser either way.

Stealing Dos and Don'ts

- Do the right thing.
- Don't steal.

Feeling Sorry for Yourself

Pity, from the Old French *pite*, "compassion," is a feeling of sorrow caused by suffering and misfortune. Pity also causes regret and disappointment. You can have self-pity or you can take pity on others. You can even have a pity party, although they aren't much fun.

Everyone gets sad from time-to-time. That's okay. What's not so good is when you feel sorry for yourself on a regular basis; in other words, you do it every time something doesn't go your way. Here's what we mean.

Say you're competing for a spot on the baseball travel team, and you don't make it. You're disappointed and sad about what's happened. Disappointment and sorrow are natural, healthy responses. Feeling these emotions is how you work through and accept the fact that you weren't picked for the team.

But, don't confuse healthy emotions with self-pity. Your disappointment and sadness turn into self-pity when they go on and on, you get angry with the coach and

the players who made the team, and you start making excuses for why you didn't make it. You play the role of a victim by blaming others for the situation in which you find yourself—dwelling on, wallowing in, and clinging to the sorrow and disappointment.

Self-pity feels good. It gives you excuses to rationalize why you failed, to escape the reality of what's happened. Playing your version of it over and over in your head allows you to scapegoat your personal responsibility. People who are wrapped up and bogged down in self-pity believe they've been wronged and that everyone should feel sorry for them.

> PITY COSTS NOTHING AND AIN'T WORTH NOTHING.
>
> JOSH BILLINGS

Try these things to avoid sliding down the slippery slope into self-pity.

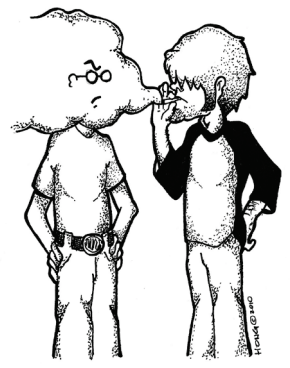
Feeling Sorry for Yourself Dos and Don'ts

- Be on guard. Recognize when you're crossing the line between disappointment, sorrow and self-pity.
- Make a deal. Don't indulge in the behaviors associated with self-pity. Take

responsibility for who you are and who you want to be.

- Improve yourself. Make new goals. Try new things. Don't let self-pity put you on the bench.
- Be successful. Do things you can accomplish.
- Stay busy. Don't stagnate.

SMOKING



You can *blow smoke*, *go up in smoke*, and trick people with *smoke and mirrors*. You can *smoke like a chimney* and *die for a smoke*, both literally and figuratively. And don't forget that *where there's smoke there's fire*. Of course, here we're talking about smok*ing*, an intransitive verb meaning to inhale and exhale the smoke of tobacco.

Do people still smoke? You bet they do! According to the America Lung Association, almost 6,000 people under 18 years of age start smoking every day—more than two million young people every year.

It wasn't too long ago that anyone could buy cigarettes and smoke anywhere they wanted to—even in hospitals. There were advertisements for cigarettes every which way you turned. Nowadays, smoking is banned in almost all public places, and cigarette companies aren't allowed to advertise except in a few magazines.

Why? Because tobacco contains chemicals, like nicotine and cyanide, that are poisonous. These days, almost everyone knows that the poison chemicals in tobacco cause cancer, emphysema, and heart disease. They know that every cigarette you smoke shortens your life by 5 to 20 minutes. And they know that buying cigarettes costs thousands of dollars a year, enough money to buy a car.

And if that's not bad enough, nicotine is also highly addictive. Your body and mind get used to the nicotine, and you need it just to feel normal. Being addicted means you can't stop smoking cigarettes. And you can't stop buying the very cigarettes that will shorten your life with each one you smoke. Where's the sense in that?

All the bad consequences of smoking probably seem far off in the future, but they're not. In addition to the long-term problems caused by those poison chemicals, there are also problems you'll have right away. Here are just a few of them:

Bad skin. Smoking restricts blood vessels preventing oxygen and nutrients

from getting to your skin—which is why smokers look pale and unhealthy.

Bad teeth and breath. Cigarettes make your teeth yellow and give you halitosis, otherwise called bad breath.

Smelly clothes and hair. The smell of cigarette smoke stinks up your clothes, hair, and everything it touches.

Impaired performance. People who smoke can't compete because of rapid heartbeat, decreased circulation, and shortness of breath.

More sickness. Smokers get more colds, flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia than nonsmokers. And if you have asthma, it will make it worse.

If you don't smoke, you'll be in better health, have more money in your pocket, and live longer. That sounds like a good deal.

Smoking Dos and Don'ts

- If you smoke, quit.
- If you don't smoke, don't start.
- Don't substitute filtered or low-tar cigarettes for regular cigarettes. They are not better for you.

Consider This: Chewing tobacco is just as bad for your body as smoking.

DRINKING

You can drink up, drink something in, and fall in the drink. Here, though, we're talking about *drinking*, meaning to consume or be in the habit of consuming alcohol, especially to excess. Drink, drank, drunk.

Alcohol, otherwise known in chemistry class as C_2H_5OH, is a colorless, volatile, flammable liquid that is the intoxicating part of wine, beer, spirits, and other drinks. Alcohol is created when grains, fruits, or vegetables are fermented. Fermentation is a process that uses yeast or bacteria to change the sugars in the food into alcohol. In its different forms, alcohol is also used as a sedative, cleaner, antiseptic, and fuel.

When a person drinks a glass of wine, the alcohol in the wine is absorbed into their bloodstream. From there, the alcohol slows the functions of their central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), which controls body functions. It blocks some of the messages trying to get to the brain, thereby altering perceptions, emotions, movement, vision, and hearing.

In small amounts, alcohol relaxes people and makes them less inhibited, meaning they don't always show good judgment and make wise decisions. In greater amounts, alcohol causes loss of coordination, slowed reflexes, loss of self-control, memory lapses, and slurred speech. If a person consumes enough alcohol, they can get what's called alcohol poisoning. The first symptom of alcohol poisoning is violent vomiting, followed by extreme sleepiness, unconsciousness, difficulty breathing, dangerously low blood sugar, seizures, and sometimes death.

Even though the legal drinking age in the United States is 21, almost everyone has access to alcohol. That means it's up to you to make the decision about whether or not to drink. You make the choice. Don't let your friends do it for you.

Drinking Dos and Don'ts

- If you decide to drink, wait until you're of legal age.
- Don't mix alcohol with other drugs or medicines.
- Don't get into a car with someone who's been drinking.

TAKING DRUGS

From the Old French *drogue*, drugs are either man-made chemicals or natural substances that change the way your body works. Once in your body, a drug gets absorbed into your bloodstream. From there, depending on the drug, it can kill bacteria, intensify or dull your senses, put you to sleep, wake you up, and make pain disappear.

There are *therapeutic* drugs, like antibiotics and vaccines, which help people by lowering blood pressure, treating diabetes, curing infections, and preventing disease. Therapeutic drugs are legal, meaning doctors prescribe them for patients, stores sell them, and people buy them at a drug store. It's neither legal nor safe to use therapeutic drugs differently than instructed by a doctor.

Tobacco and alcohol are two other kinds of legal drugs. (See *Smoking* and *Drinking*.) In the United States, adults 18 and over can buy tobacco products, like cigarettes, and those 21 and over can buy alcohol. Even though it's legal, smoking and excessive drinking aren't healthy.

There are also *recreational* drugs that people use to feel good and have a good time. People start using recreational drugs for the excitement and temporary escape they seem to offer. When people talk about the "drug problem," they usually mean recreational drugs. And that means 1) taking high doses of therapeutic drugs that weren't prescribed by a doctor; 2) using illegal drugs, like ecstasy, cocaine, LSD, or heroin; or 3) using some other substance as a drug, like sniffing glue.

Short-List of Recreational Drugs to Avoid

Inhalants are substances that are breathed or sniffed directly into the user's nose, like glue, paint thinner, dry cleaning fluid, gasoline, felt-tip marker fluid, correction fluid, hair spray, aerosol deodorant, and spray paint. Long-time users get headaches,

nosebleeds, and suffer loss of hearing and sense of smell. Inhalants are the most likely of abused substances to cause severe toxic reaction and death. Inhalants are psychologically addictive.

Marijuana, made from the leaves of the cannabis plant, is the most widely used drug in the United States. Marijuana is generally considered an illegal recreational drug, but some states allow doctors to prescribe it for certain illnesses. Marijuana elevates heart rate and blood pressure, and makes some people paranoid or causes them to hallucinate. When smoked, marijuana is as tough on the lungs as tobacco and users suffer coughs, wheezing, and frequent colds. Marijuana is psychologically addictive.

Amphetamines, like prescription diet pills, are stimulants that accelerate brain and body functions. Users suffer from sweating, shaking, blurred vision, headaches, sleeplessness, hallucinations, and paranoia. Amphetamines are psychologically addictive.

DXM is made from over-the-counter cough and cold medicines. Taken in large enough doses, it causes hallucinations, fever, blurred vision, paranoia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal

pain, irregular heartbeat, seizures, loss of consciousness, brain damage, and death. DXM is psychologically addictive.

Depressants, like Valium and Xanax, are used by doctors to calm nerves and relax muscles. In large doses, depressants cause confusion, slurred speech, tremors, irregular breathing, and death. Depressants are psychologically and physically addictive.

Ketamine is an anesthetic that is legally used in humans (as a sedative for minor surgery) and animals (as a tranquilizer). Taken at high enough doses, it causes nausea, vomiting, memory loss, numbness, slowed breathing, and death. Ketamine is psychologically addictive.

Cocaine is a stimulant made from dried coca plant leaves that affects the central nervous system. It elevates heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and body temperature. Cocaine is highly addictive with strong physical and psychological cravings after just one use.

Crack, named for its crackle when heated, is made from cocaine. First-time crack users can stop breathing or have heart attacks. Like cocaine, crack is highly addictive.

Ecstacy is a recreational drug illegally made just for the drug trade. Users suffer from cramps, blurred vision, chills, sweating, nausea, depression, paranoia, organ damage, and sometimes death. Ecstacy is psychologically addictive.

Methamphetamine is a recreational drug made for the drug trade. Users suffer sleeplessness, paranoia, hallucinations, aggression, psychosis, and brain damage. Methamphetamine is highly addictive.

Drug Dos and Don'ts

- Be smart.
- Don't do drugs.

BEING LATE

Late, from the Old English *laet*, "slow, tardy," means something taking place or done after the expected, proper, or usual time. Certain people are so dependably and predictably behind schedule, it's said that when the time comes, they'll be late to their own funeral.

Funerals aside, being late is generally looked down on. Take a dentist appointment, for example. Think of it as an unwritten contract, a promise that you'll both meet at 2 p.m. to have your teeth cleaned. But, there are too many people asking too much of you, too many things pulling you in too many directions, and too many promises to keep. These are the excuses you'll hear from people who are late.

> THE ONLY REASON FOR TIME IS SO THAT EVERYTHING DOESN'T HAPPEN AT ONCE.
>
> ALBERT EINSTEIN

Every late arrival sends a message to the people waiting that they're less important than you and what you were doing. In their minds, you had a choice to make, and you

chose another person or activity. Do it enough and your relationship with those people will suffer. Being late sends a signal that you aren't dependable and not to be trusted.

Being on time takes planning and effort. If you have the reputation for always being late, here are a few dos and don'ts to help get you back on track.

Being Late Dos and Don'ts

- Don't over-commit. Prioritize your commitments if you have more than can be done in the time available. Say "no" to things at the bottom of the list. Not even superman can be two places at one time.
- Count backwards. If your dentist appointment is at 2 p.m. and it will take 30 minutes to get there, add 10 minutes for good measure, and leave at 1:20 p.m., not a minute later.
- Know how to leave. If you're with another person when the time to leave comes, make a graceful exit. Just say, "I'm sorry, I hate to cut you off, but I have an appointment and I need to get going." Most people will respect you for sticking to the schedule.
- Overestimate. Assume everything takes longer than you think. It does, after all. Being a little early is better than being

late. You will be calm, collected, and ready to go.

- Stay in touch. If you did everything right and you're still going to be late, call the other person and let them know. It happens.

Saying No to Everything

Some people *won't take no for an answer*. Sometimes *the noes have it*. At other times, there's *no two ways about it*. Evolved from Shinto rites, *No* is the name of a traditional 14th century Japanese all-male masked drama. And *No* is the designation for chemical element Nobelium. Here, however, we are talking about "no," meaning to give a negative response. It's the answer you'll get if you ask someone on the street for a million dollars.

How often and for what reasons do you say, "No?" I say "no" all the time, probably 20 times a day. Even as I write this, my first reaction is, "There's no way I say 'no' that much!" But, I think I just might.

> And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.
>
> Abraham Lincoln

People say "no" not just to things that deserve it, but also to new ideas and possibilities. For some it's a first reaction, a knee-jerk response without thinking—you know, a habit. Saying "no" stifles your chance to experience new

things, make unexpected discoveries, learn, and grow.

Every day holds opportunities to try a new food or go to a movie you wouldn't usually see. In doing these simple things, you begin learning how to say "yes." And saying "yes" more often will allow you to see what life has to offer and, in the process, discover more about yourself.

Of course, it's impossible to say, "yes," to everything. There are lots of times that saying "no" is the right answer. Like when the store clerk offers you a two-for-one deal on DVDs you'll never watch, the waiter wants you to have dessert even though you're not hungry, or a person comes to your door and wants you to buy magazines you'll never read.

Sometimes it's not easy knowing when to say "yes" and when to say "no." It takes practice and understanding to strike the right balance. Here are some dos and don'ts for those of us always leaning toward "no."

Saying No Dos and Don'ts

- Think before you say "NO!"
- Look for opportunities to say "yes."
- Always say "no" when it's deserved.

Being Jealous

Jealous, from the Low Latin *zelosus*, "full of zeal," is to feel or show envy of someone or their achievements and advantages. You can be protective or vigilant of rights and possessions, as in "Nicky is jealous of his father's authority." Or you may feel or show suspicion of someone's unfaithfulness in a relationship, as in "Kerry is a very jealous girlfriend."

Jealousy is a common emotion. Everyone experiences it to some degree at one time or another. That's why there are so many songs, books, movies, and poems about jealousy. There are even paintings of jealous lovers.

Jealousy is the strongest emotion. It's more potent than anger, lasting many times longer before losing its passion and intensity. Almost always, jealousy outlasts the attachment on which it's based. As Francois De La Rochefoucauld observed, "Jealousy is always born with love, but does not always die with it."

As an emotion, jealousy combines the negative thoughts and feelings of fear,

suspicion, insecurity, anger, distrust, uncertainty, sadness, and loneliness. That's a caustic mix, any one part of which can make for a very tortured and unhappy life.

Even as undesirable as it is, jealousy is difficult to avoid. It seems there's always something to be jealous about. From your friend's awesome video game collection to your girlfriend's flirting ways, it creeps into your life. If not checked, jealousy ruins relationships and it makes you look weak and insecure.

> O, BEWARE, MY LORD, OF JEALOUSY; IT IS THE GREEN-EY'D MONSTER, WHICH DOTH MOCK THE MEAT IT FEEDS ON.
>
> SHAKESPEARE

So how can you get a grip on jealousy? The best way is to figure out why you feel jealous in the first place. It's likely because you feel something is being threatened or taken from you. You're jealous of your girlfriend because you want reassurance she'll still be with you tomorrow. You don't want to lose her because you're not confident enough to be self-sufficient.

Even though they feel jealousy, some people turn it off before it becomes

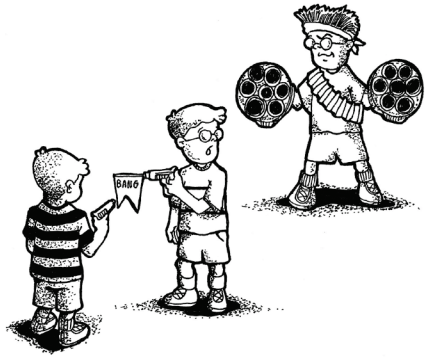
destructive. How do they do it? They accept themselves as they are, the good and the bad. And they involve themselves in healthy, solid relationships with everyone in their lives. Doing these things builds self-confidence.

But, building self-confidence isn't always easy. It most often comes with age and the experience of having made good decisions along the way. Confidence in you is the key to keeping jealousy at arm's length. Put your life in perspective by knowing that you have things others don't, and they have things you don't. It's just the way it is.

Being Jealous Dos and Don'ts

- Think it through.
- Get control.
- Move on.
- Don't look back.

PLAYING WITH GUNS



Guns. You can be a *big gun*, *go great guns*, *jump the gun*, and be *under the gun*. Some people spend their time looking for a *smoking gun*. Of course, we're talking about gun guns. *Real* guns, that is, not the plastic variety that shoots sticky darts. The kind of guns you buy at a gun shop, the kind with which you can kill large animals and yourself if you're not careful.

Guns and gun violence are everywhere, from movies to television to video games. And they're all very realistic—with one exception. Nothing is real. When you get killed in *Modern Warfare*, you come back to life 5 seconds later. That doesn't happen in real life. You're just dead.

Guns are appealing. The sound of pumping a shotgun, the feel of a pistol grip in the palm of your hand, the push of the

rifle stock against your shoulder as you pull the trigger, and the loud report as the gun fires. Some people find it exhilarating.

Guns are dangerous. You already know the statistics about the children, teenagers, and adults killed by gunfire each year. There's one worth mentioning: the Children's Defense Fund says that more children and teens die each year from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined.

Guns are everywhere. Chances are good that you have a gun in your house. Chances are even better that someone you know does. That's reason enough to know the basics, like how to hold a gun: point it away from people and in a safe direction. The best place to learn gun safety basics is by taking a gun safety course. The knowledge will serve you well.

Playing With Guns Dos and Don'ts

- If you play with toy guns, treat them like they're real. It's good practice.
- If you play with BB, pellet, airsoft, or paint ball guns, wear eye protection and clothing that protects your body. These

guns can injure you and others around you. Be careful.

- If you handle real guns, do it in a way you would want others to imitate. Be a good role model and take a gun safety class.
- Assume every gun is always loaded.
- Never point a gun at anything you're not willing to kill or destroy.
- Keep the gun's safety on and your finger away from the trigger until you're ready to shoot.

Wasting Energy

Waste, from the Old Northern French *wast(e)*, means to use or expend carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose. You can *lay waste to something* or *lay something to waste*. You can *waste your breath* and let something *go to waste*. You can *waste not want not*, which is a good thing to do. Here we're talking about wasting energy, meaning you're using more than your share.

There are lots of ways to waste energy around the house. You can leave the lights on, leave the refrigerator door open, or take a hot bath every night. Why a hot bath? Well, baths use up lots of energy heating the water. Showers use a lot less hot water, especially showers with water-saver showerheads. The less hot water you use, the less energy it takes to heat it. And the less energy you use, the lower your monthly electric bill is—all good things.

> Waste not, want not.
>
> Anonymous

Did you know that most electronics, like chargers, computers, TVs, and your electric toothbrush, suck up electricity when

they're plugged in and sitting idle? It's called *vampire power*. Collectively, it adds up to more than $4 billion a year of wasted energy in the United States. The Department of Energy says that about 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics is used while the products are turned off.

Most of us get our electricity from our local power company. But, if you're really resourceful you might consider generating your own electricity. All you need are solar panels and the sun. If you live in Seattle, though, just hope your house sits on a geothermal vent (steam power), next to a river (hydro power), or you have a windmill (wind power) in your backyard. Remember that if you make more electricity than you use, you can sell the extra back to the power company. They'll send *you* a check every month instead of the other way around.

Wasting Energy Dos and Don'ts

- Conserve electricity. Small changes in how you use it make big differences.

- Conserve water. It takes lots of energy to make clean water come out of your faucet.
- Use recycled products. It takes more energy to produce a new bottle from scratch than from recycled material.
- Be on the lookout for ways you can save energy. It helps the environment and saves you money.

BEING CRITICAL

From the Greek *kritikos*a, "a judge," being critical is the act of expressing adverse or disapproving comments or judgments. In addition to *being critical*, you can get yourself into a *critical situation*, win *critical acclaim*, and be in *critical condition*.

Criticism is either constructive or destructive. Constructive criticism is meant to help someone improve by giving them honest feedback. The challenge is to give the feedback in a way that people will accept it. Even well intentioned criticism is often taken as mean-spirited, particularly if it focuses on the person instead of their actions or if the language is insulting or degrading. Although it can be done, constructive criticism is hard to give and even harder to receive in even the best circumstances.

> WE'RE ALWAYS QUICKEST TO CRITCIZE OUR OWN FAULTS IN OTHERS.
>
> ANONYMOUS

Destructive criticism is much more common. People dish it out to boost their egos and hurt others by rating them against arbitrary standards. People who do the

criticizing are usually frustrated, jealous, angry, feeling taken advantage of, or lacking self-confidence. They project their unhappiness onto others through their criticism.

Somewhere, sometime, someone has likely said to you, "You don't know what you're doing." That's not constructive. A better way to say it would be, "You look like you might be having some trouble. Can I give you a hand?" Feel the difference? The words and the message are supportive, not judgmental. Try that approach the next time you want to give someone feedback.

Being Critical Dos and Don'ts

- Handle both giving and getting constructive criticism with kid gloves. It takes finesse to give and understanding to receive feedback, a.k.a. constructive criticism.
- Be on the lookout for destructive criticism. It chips away at your self-esteem.
- If you dish out destructive criticism, stop. You're not doing anyone a favor.

ARGUING

To argue, from the Latin *argutari*, "prattle," means to exchange or express divergent or opposite views, typically in a heated or angry way. You can *argue someone into* or *out of* something. And you can *argue the point*. Here, we're talking about a good old-fashioned argument when two people stand toe-to-toe and let each other have it.

People don't always get along, nor do they always see eye-to-eye. Parents argue with parents, brothers argue with sisters, and kids argue with parents. Fact is, the more familiar you are with someone, the more likely you are to argue with him or her.

> I DON'T MIND ARGUING WITH MYSELF. IT'S WHEN I LOSE THAT IT BOTHERS ME.
>
> RICHARD POWERS

Arguing is so ingrained in some people it comes as easy and naturally as breathing. For them, any time's a good time to argue. Arguing is how

they discuss things and how they resolve disagreements with others. The trouble is, it doesn't work very well.

For example, if Chase and Garrett disagree about who gets to ride shotgun in the family car, Chase would probably say, "I called it first," and then Garrett would point out that Chase rode shotgun yesterday. The rhetoric gets more heated with each exchange, points and counterpoints are made, and then it turns personal with raised voices and name-calling. (See *Calling People Names*.)

Instead, Chase and Garrett could step back, take a deep breath, and try empathetic listening. That's when they restate each other's position, followed by "Did I get that right?" Chase would say something like, "What I hear you saying is that I rode shotgun yesterday and today it's your turn. Is that right?" Garrett would agree with Chase and then say something acknowledging Chase's position. They continue taking turns talking, all the while remembering that there's another person involved in the conversation who has a different opinion.

At some point, Chase and Garrett may settle on a compromise, agreeing to take turns riding shotgun, or they may agree-to-disagree. Either way, each person's opinion is recognized and respected by the other. Resolving an argument this way takes some time—and practice—but it's worth it because it works.

Arguing Dos and Don'ts

- Don't argue—talk.
- Stay calm. Having a cool head makes it easier to resolve disagreements and helps the other person stay in control, too. (See *Losing Your Temper.*)
- Don't get personal. Focus on the issue, not the person.
- Use empathetic listening to see the issue from the other person's perspective. (See *Not Listening*.)
- Look for ways you both can win. Be open to a compromise that satisfies you and the other person.
- Get help when you need it. Sometimes, another person who's not involved can bring new ideas and perspectives to the table.

Being a Bully

Bully, from the Middle Dutch *boele*, "lover," means a person who uses strength or power to harm or intimidate those who are weaker. "Bully" was originally used as a term of endearment, ergo its root from the Dutch. The more derogatory current sense of the word dates to the 17th century. Since then, bullies also go by the name oppressor, tyrant, tormentor, intimidator, tough guy, ruffian, and thug.

> Of course I'm going to say, "I'm a thug." That's because I came from the gutter and I'm still here.
>
> Tupac Shakur, a.k.a. 2Pac (1971 – 1996)

There are lots of ways to be a bully. You can hit, kick, push, pinch, bite, threaten, tease, mimic, name call, insult, gossip, spread rumors, or exclude someone from a group. Whew! It seems you have lots of options if you're a bully. But, no matter how you bully someone, the end game is always to scare, intimidate, or hurt the other person.

Bullying happens anywhere there are people. Sometimes, people bully others because they see their friends doing it. It's a way to protect them from being bullied by the

very people they think are their friends. In some circles, bullying is expected if a person wants to hang out with the "right" crowd. People with low self-esteem are usually bullies. It makes them feel stronger, smarter, or better than the person they're bullying.

It's very common these days for bullies to use the Internet and cell phones. It's called cyber-bullying and here are some examples.

Flaming. Email, text, or other messages that use angry vulgar language.

Harassing. Sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages to the same person over and over again.

Impersonating. Pretending to be someone else and spreading false information to get that person in trouble or to damage his or her reputation or friendships.

Denigrating. Starting or passing along gossip or rumors meant to damage someone's reputation or friendships.

Outing. Sharing secrets or embarrassing information or pictures of someone.

Tricking. Talking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information about themselves and then sharing it.

Excluding. Purposely and cruelly excluding someone from an online group.

If you want to avoid cyber-bullying, don't give out your personal information, whether in IM profiles, chat rooms, blogs, or social networks. Never give anyone your password—not even your friends. Don't respond to mean or threatening emails, social network messages, IMs, or texts. "Block" the person, delete the message, log off, or shut down your phone or computer. People can't bully you if they can't reach you.

And don't participate in "sexting." That's when naked or partly naked pictures of you or someone else are shared over the Internet or by cell phone. Before you send any pictures of yourself or others over the Internet or through your cell phone, ask yourself this question, "Would I want my friends and parents to see them?"

The Bully Quiz		
Do you spread rumors or gossip about people?	Yes	No
Do you make fun of or tease people for how they look, talk, dress, or act?	Yes	No
Have you ever threatened to hurt someone?	Yes	No

The Bully Quiz		
Have you ever punched, shoved, or hit someone just because you felt like it?	Yes	No
Do you make mean faces or derogatory hand signs to people?	Yes	No
Do you tell secrets in front of people and make it a point not to tell them?	Yes	No
Are you a part of a club or group that dictates who can and cannot be friends?	Yes	No
Have you sent cruel threatening email, texts, or IMs?	Yes	No

If you answered two or more questions with a "yes," you tend to bully people. If you answered "yes" to less than two, you're not a bully, but you can still be the victim of one. No matter what your score, here're some dos and don'ts to consider.

Being a Bully Dos and Don'ts

- If someone bullies you, get help from parents, a coach, teacher, or friend.
- Stay in a group so you're not an "easy" target.
- Stand up to the bully if it feels safe. Stay calm, tell them to "Cut it out!" and walk away.
- If you're acting like a bully, stop. If you don't believe it's a loser, ask Tupac Shakur. Oh, yeah, you can't—he was shot dead.

Biting Your Nails

Nail biting is the habit of chewing on one's fingernails or toenails while nervous, anxious, or bored. Fingernail biting is quite common. Toenail biting, however, is not something you see every day, as it requires a contortionist-like ability possessed by only a few people.

Nails are the horn-like covering on the upper surface of the tip of your fingers and toes and those of other humans and primates. Think of fingernails and toenails as our version of claws, hooves, and talons, all made of keratin protein like that in your skin and hair.

Nails are handy. You can scratch an itch, rip open an orange, untie a knot, and pick your nose if you want. To test the usefulness of your fingernails, cover the ends of your fingers with tape and then try to take a nut from its shell, remove cat hair from your sweater, or pick up a dime. The results will give you new appreciation for that translucent hard covering on the ends of your fingers.

Now back to biting. As a result of what you touch, there are loads of germs crammed up under your fingernails. When you bite them, the germs go directly into your mouth. The idea is that germs make you sick, and it's best to avoid getting them inside you.

Having been taught as children that it's a bad habit, generations of parents have simultaneously pestered and begged their children to stop biting their fingernails. The irony is that lots of adults, many of them parents themselves, regularly chomp their own nails right down to the quick.

Have you been thinking about stopping? Ask your friends for assistance. Since you probably don't even know when you're chewing your nails, the most helpful thing your friends can do is to bring it to your attention. If this realization and the accompanying peer pressure don't do the trick, you might want to buy a special colorless nail polish that makes your nails taste really awful. Then, there's always hypnosis.

Now, to satisfy your hunger for more information, here are some interesting facts to chew on.

A Few Nail Biting Facts

- The name for chronic nail biting is *onychophagia*.
- Some people consider fingernail biting as the grown-up equivalent of sucking your thumb.
- Guitar players sometimes grow long nails and use them as guitar picks.
- According to Freud, nail biting is a symptom of oral fixation.
- Some people say that chewing off pieces of your nails and the surrounding skin is akin to self-cannibalism.
- Lee Redmond, who definitely does not bite her nails, holds the world record for the longest fingernails. Her longest single nail is on her right thumb and measures 2 feet 11 inches.

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